

From: John P. Williams
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft antitrust

I am an extremely busy person but I thought it sufficiently important to stop all my meetings this morning to allow myself time to comment on the task before the justice department.

Microsoft has since its inception co-opted, coerced and colluded with various manufacturers, both software and hardware, to not only dominate but decimate the marketplace. This is seen most clearly in the case of my operating system of choice, the Macintosh but applies equally well to Sun, Unix, Linux and others.

Without the Mac none of you today would use a mouse, a graphical user interface (GUI) or even be discussing this topic because it would not exist. Microsoft quite clearly stole the OS design from Apple and although their lawyers were better than Apple's in defending their case, nothing can change the fact that Windows in any flavor did NOT exist prior to the Macintosh.

Since that time, Microsoft has gone on to co-opt every area that is available starting of course with business world. To be sure when this process started there was no apriori reason to believe that Microsoft would prevail and had they not procured the GUI, their market dominance would never be what it is today.

I must say that I find it interesting that we speak in this country of diversity and how each of us needs to look for and nourish diversity wherever and whenever we can find it. Indeed the very basis of this country is diversity, EXCEPT where it comes to computer OS's it seems. There we must cherish uniformity, mediocrity and domination. How does this jive with the constitutional basis of our nation? How does one justify basically telling me what system I will or will not use in my home?

Oh, I am sure you will say that this does not happen but it does! Our school is a classic example. By using market dominance in business, Microsoft has coerced the University to become a Windows only shop. Now if I want to access certain information from home I must use a Windows computer or I cannot do my job. Is this what our country really wants? To be tied permanently and completely to one system? Especially if that system is riddled with security flaws and holes? I hope not.

Why is this relevant to the current recommendation? As you can see, the ability of Microsoft to compel users to them is governed in a major way by how they can distribute their product. If you act to make that distribution easier, you doom all of us to a certain future in the hands of one, not so responsive, company. We as a nation would not tolerate one electric company, one public water company, one public sewer, trash, etc, why will we

tolerate this?

Further, when do we decide that my decision to use Linux or Unix or the Mac is any different than my choice of religion. Oh I can hear you, this is ridiculous as an analogy, but it actually works quite well. Religions are faith based, certainly in this case you are putting your work, your life in a very real sense, in the hands of the computer company with which you do business. If that religion or OS fails you, that is probably the end of your relationship; unless of course there is no other religion to choose...

Religions are also chosen, most commonly by prior association but also quite commonly by the individual making a conscious decision to select the religion that most closely matches their world view. We consider religion to be a sacrosanct virtue in this country and protect and guard it closely. Should it be any different for our OS choice? Is it really in our country's best interest to decrease the number of choices for religions? They tried that in Afghanistan...

One might well ask how the current proposal will effect these changes? By making it very easy for Microsoft to enter into an arena where they have not traditionally dominated, education, one knocks down the last barrier to choice left in this country. The Apple proposal is wholly more sensible. Allowing schools to use the money donated by Microsoft in any manner that they see fit, allows true choice to continue and preserves the multi-ethnic character of our computer world.

Indeed one could easily take the stand that to truly preserve the multi-ethnicity of our computer world we need affirmative action. That is we need to actually insist that some businesses be given special incentives to use OTHER computer OS's in order to cause this multi-ethnicity to flourish. How can it be that we seek to do good in one area of our country while doing harm in another?

In closing I would make one other analogy, this one quite close to home. There are many reasons why diversity is valued in a culture but it is also valued in nature. Indeed the very essence of nature is diversity. I do not think it is too much of a stretch to imagine what happens when one seeks to shrink the gene pool. There are numerous examples of how treacherous that coastline is...we need only think back on the 20th century to see what can happen when this type of thought process is allowed to roam free.

More importantly, what would happen to group of people that were closely related and interbred when a new disease enters that group. If the group is sensitive to the infective organism, their culture is decimated. Look at what happened to the native Americans or islanders soon after the arrival of Europeans. With no natural immunity to smallpox, they were eradicated just as surely as if that had been a conscious and willful act. Do we really wish to place ourselves in this same position with our computers, our knowledge, our lives...

I urge you to reject the current proposal for Microsoft at all costs. It is a dangerous and crumbling cornice on which we do not need to stand. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak.

Sincerely yours

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